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ABSTRACT

Male (N=920) and female (N=915) rural, senior high school students from Eastern Kentucky (N=643), Central Kentucky (N=617), and Western Kentucky (N=575) were surveyed for purposes of exploring: levels of occupational and educational aspirations and expectations, felt certainty of achieving career goals, and migration plans after graduation according to sex and region of residence and the relationship of socioeconomic factors and intelligence test scores to levels of occupational and educational aspirations and expectations. Some findings were: males most often aspired to professional occupations and females to white-collar positions; levels of occupational aspiration were lowest for Eastern Kentucky males and highest for Western Kentucky males; males most often expected to enter manual or farming occupations and females expected to enter white-collar occupations; lowest levels of occupational expectations were for Eastern Kentucky males and highest levels were for Western Kentucky males; high proportions of both sexes aspired to attend college with greater proportions found in Western Kentucky; about as many males and females expected to as aspired to enter college; high proportions of both sexes expected to leave their counties after graduation; high proportions of both sexes were relatively sure of achieving their career goals; for both sexes, the probability of choosing a high-status occupation or attending college correlated with high socioeconomic status and high IQ. (JC)

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THE OCCUPATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND PLANS OF RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

By Donald W. Bogie

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THE OCCUPATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND PLANS
OF RURAL KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

by Donald W. Bogie*

Numerous research studies in recent years have focused on the career choices and educational plans of rural youth.¹ These studies have been instrumental in explaining various facets of the occupational and educational choice process and have been helpful in the development of applied programs leading to better utilization of rural manpower. This information has also proven useful to youth counselors, teachers, and school administrators in aiding youngsters in the formulation and implementation of career goals.

Kentucky studies with this general focus were begun in the late 1950s. At that time the University of Kentucky's School of Home Economics became involved in Southern Regional Research Project 48, from which findings were published in 1965 and 1968.² In 1959 and 1960, the Rural Sociology Department published reports dealing with the career plans of 16- and 17-year-old Kentucky youths in low-income areas and the aspirations of rural

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¹For recent bibliographies of the research literature see: William P. Kuvlesky and D. H. Reynolds, Occupational Aspirations and Expectations of Youth: A Bibliography of Research Literature. I (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Departmental Information Report 70-4, 1970) and William P. Kuvlesky and David H. Reynolds, Educational Aspirations and Expectations of Youth: A Bibliography of Research Literature. II (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Departmental Information Report 70-5, 1970).

²Southern Cooperative Series, Educational and Vocational Goals of Rural Youth in the South (Raleigh, North Carolina: University of North Carolina, Agricultural Experiment Station, Technical Bulletin 107, 1965). The findings of a parallel study of urban youth (S-48 Revised), involving a Kentucky sample, were published in 1968 as Southern Cooperative Series, Educational and Vocational Goals of Urban Youth in the South (Raleigh, North Carolina: University of North Carolina, Agricultural Experiment Station, Technical Bulletin 136, 1968).

Kentucky high school seniors.³ These were followed by three other Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station bulletins published during the 1960s.⁴

These studies have yielded much valuable information regarding the major processes and hurdles in the career-choosing process of Kentucky's youngsters, but have also focused attention on additional questions needing further research and investigation. To provide continuing information on this topic, as well as to add to the growing body of scientific knowledge about the phenomenon of career planning, the present research was undertaken in the spring of 1968. For these same reasons, similar research by University of Kentucky sociologists has continued into the 1970s. (For a listing of these research studies, see the bibliography at the end of this report.)

More than 1,800 rural Kentucky high school seniors in three different regions of Kentucky participated in the present study. The data were collected through self-administered questionnaires from all seniors who were present on the day that contact was made at each of 15 high schools. Included in the questionnaire were items relating to personal and family background characteristics, occupational and educational goals and plans, parental influence, and occupational values. Although information representing a wide range of topics was obtained, only the major findings are included in this report.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research findings presented herein focus on three major aspects of the occupational/educational decision-making process: (1) differences in career-choice patterns between males and females; (2) regional differences in career-choice patterns; and (3) the relationship of various socioeconomic factors and intelligence test scores to occupational and educational goals.

³E. Grant Youmans, The Educational Attainment and Future Plans of Kentucky Rural Youth (Lexington: Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 664, 1959) and Harry K. Schwarzweller, Sociocultural Factors and the Career Aspirations and Plans of Rural Kentucky High School Seniors (Lexington: Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station Progress Report 94, 1960).

⁴Harry K. Schwarzweller, Sociocultural Origins and Migration Patterns of Young Men from Eastern Kentucky, Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 685, 1963; Harry K. Schwarzweller, Career Placement and Economic Life Chances of Young Men from Eastern Kentucky, Bulletin 686, 1964; Harry K. Schwarzweller, Family Ties, Migration, and Transitional Adjustment of Young Men from Eastern Kentucky, Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 691, 1964.

Considerable research has been done relating to each of these research foci. A large number of studies, for example, have investigated differences in career-choice patterns between the sexes. They reveal substantial differences, but also some similarities, in how males and females face the prospects of choosing a career and implementing career goals. It has generally been found that higher proportions of females than males choose white-collar and professional occupations, that family socioeconomic status is more closely associated with levels of occupational choice for males than females, but that males and females both aspire and expect to attend college in roughly equal proportions. Schwabsweller found in his 1960 study of rural high school seniors that significantly greater proportions of males than females chose "high-status" occupations, that propensity to migrate was much greater for females than males, and that a greater proportion of females than males preferred urban residence after graduation from high school.⁵ Most of these variations in choice patterns have been explained in terms of differences in behavioral patterns emerging from the socialization process and the differential position of females in the larger social structure.

It has also been suggested that the "broader social context" or "general social milieu" in which youth live and interact may also have an important bearing on the crystallization of occupational/educational choice levels. Thus, the effects of the school, neighborhood, and community "context" have recently come under more intensive investigation in the development of youth aspiration models. Specifically, it has been hypothesized that "model aspiration levels" and "normative climates" may emerge within these settings that have an even more pervasive effect on youth aspiration levels than such "discrete" variables as sex, socioeconomic status or intelligence level.⁶ To "test-out" various considerations related to the "social context thesis," an interregional comparative perspective is utilized in this research. Here, youngsters in three Kentucky regions are compared as to similarities and differences in occupational and educational status orientations.

The third focus of the present research is on factors related to levels of occupational and educational aspiration. Previous studies indicate that family socioeconomic status is perhaps the factor most frequently and consistently associated with aspiration/expectation levels. There are many other variables, however, that may help explain the career-choosing process. Thus, in the last section of this report, findings concerning the influence of socioeconomic factors and intelligence test scores on levels of occupational/educational choice will be presented.

⁵Sociocultural Factors and Career Aspirations, op. cit., pp. 34-37.

⁶William H. Sewell and J. Michael Armer, "Neighborhood Context and College Plans," American Sociological Review, XXXI (April 1966), 159-68.

The above are some of the general considerations to which the study was addressed. Specifically, this research explores each of the following:

- (1) Levels of occupational and educational aspirations, according to sex and region of residence.
- (2) Levels of occupational and educational expectations, according to sex and region of residence.
- (3) Felt-certainty of achieving career goals, according to sex and region of residence.
- (4) Migration plans after graduation from high school, according to sex and region of residence.
- (5) The relationship of socioeconomic factors and intelligence test scores to levels of occupational and educational aspirations and expectations.

THE STUDY POPULATION

The 15 high schools from which the sample was secured included 8 schools in the Eastern Kentucky region (Breathitt, Lee, Menifee, Owsley, Powell, Magoffin, Elliott, and Wolfe counties), 4 in the Central Bluegrass region (Anderson, Clark, Jessamine, and Scott counties), and 2 in Western Kentucky (Davies and Henderson counties).

The economy of the counties in the Eastern Kentucky portion of the sample is based predominantly on small-scale commercial and subsistence agriculture--the major coal-producing counties were not included. The average farm is small, and in 1960 about half of the farms in the region were classified as either "part-time" or "residential."⁷ Very little industry is located in these Eastern Kentucky counties and most of the rural families have little or no nonfarm income. Thus, it is not surprising that both per capita income and level of living are very low. This region is by far the most "rural" of the three areas included in the study. Responses to the questionnaire indicated that more than half (56%) of the Eastern Kentucky sample lived on farms in contrast to 37% in the Central Kentucky area and 27% in the Western Kentucky area. Job opportunities for young people in the region are very limited, and net out-migration rates have been high for a number of years.

The Central Kentucky portion of the sample included counties that were more highly developed economically and somewhat more urbanized than the Eastern Kentucky counties. These counties are among the most prosperous nonmetropolitan counties in Kentucky and exhibit many of the characteristics associated with an increased degree of cultural complexity.

⁷Donald J. Bogue and Calvin L. Beale, Economic Areas of the United States (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

Median income is substantially higher than in the Eastern Kentucky portion of the sample. Furthermore, varied employment opportunities are available in the nearby city of Lexington, as well as in the satellite towns of these and other nearby counties.

The two counties composing the western Kentucky part of the sample were classified as metropolitan in the 1970 census, but each still had substantial agricultural enterprises. These counties are more industrialized than the sample counties in either of the other two regions. They are also somewhat better off in terms of level of living and family income than either the central or eastern counties. Industrial enterprises provide numerous employment opportunities for young persons on the threshold of entrance into the labor market.⁸

The research design called for selecting enough schools in each of these three regions to contribute approximately 600 subjects to the study group. The actual sample consisted of 643 students from Breathitt, Lee, Menifee, Owsley, and Powell County High Schools and Salyersville and Sandy Hook High Schools in Eastern Kentucky; 617 students from Anderson, Jessamine and Scott County High Schools and George Rogers Clark and Western High Schools (Winchester and Anderson county) in Central Kentucky; and 575 students in Daviess and Henderson County High Schools in Western Kentucky. The sample was about evenly divided between males and females (920 males and 915 females).

FINDINGS

In studying the career goals of youth, the terms "idealistic aspiration" and "realistic aspiration" or simply "aspirations" and "expectations" have been used to differentiate between the two dimensions of occupational/educational choice. Regardless of how the labeling problem is solved, the "aspiration" component refers to a "wished for" or "hoped for" occupational or educational goal, while the "expectation" component is the status a person actually expects to achieve. In a large percentage of cases, aspirations are the same as expectations. When the two are different for the same individual, expectations are usually lower. The differences between the two may be referred to as "aspiration-expectation discrepancies" or "status deflections."

⁸The average median income for families and unrelated individuals for each of these regions in 1970 was: \$3,731 (Eastern Kentucky); \$7,802 (Central Kentucky); \$8,230 (Western Kentucky). Thirty-three percent of the employed males 14 years old and older in the Eastern Kentucky region (1970) were working in either professional or white-collar occupations as compared with 37.0% in Central Kentucky and 39.1% in Western Kentucky. (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Kentucky, PC(1)-C19 [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972], Tables 122 and 124.

For purposes of this analysis, occupations were divided into three major categories based on their prestige or perceived status level: (1) professional or high-status (lawyers, physicians, teachers, managerial personnel, higher-level white-collar workers, etc.); (2) lower-level white-collar (clerks, secretaries, middle-level public service employees, etc.); and (3) manual (automobile mechanics, electricians, plumbers, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, etc.) and farm.

I. Occupational Aspirations

A. Occupational Aspirations According to Sex

In assessing occupational aspirations, seniors were asked the following question: "If you were completely free to choose, what kind of work would you prefer as a life-time occupation? What would you regard as an ideal career?" Most of the male students (46%) said that they would like to enter professional occupations, while most of the females (55%) named white-collar positions (Table 1). Substantially greater proportions of males than females aspired to professional occupations on the one hand and to manual and farming occupations on the other, while a much greater proportion of females than males aspired to white-collar positions.

TABLE 1

OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS ACCORDING TO SEX

	<u>Occupational Level</u>			
	<u>Professional</u>	<u>White Collar</u>	<u>Manual and Farm</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Percent</u>			
Males (n=871)	46.2	15.6	38.2	100.0
Females (n=892)	33.3	55.0	11.7	100.0

That rural Kentucky boys aspired to professional occupations in higher proportions than girls and that girls aspired to white-collar occupations in much higher proportions than boys are not unexpected. Differing patterns of behavior and attitudes for boys and girls tend to emerge from the socialization process. Thus, familial and communal expectations have traditionally oriented females toward lower-level white-collar positions, while males have felt somewhat more pressure to aspire to occupations in the upper levels of the occupational hierarchy. Furthermore, it has been a widespread pattern for rural females to select lower-level white-collar positions as a temporary means of making a living prior to marriage, and to enter or re-enter such positions periodically to supplement family income after marriage.

For males, however, movement up the occupational hierarchy is generally viewed as the most important avenue to future success in American society. Thus, males tend more toward occupations that best assure long-range well being, while females prefer to view the occupational structure in terms of more limited, short-range goals.

B. Occupational Aspirations According to Region of Residence

As stated previously, the study design involved the collection of data from high school seniors in three different Kentucky regions. To a certain extent, these regions may be thought of as "subcultures," or functioning "subsystems" within the larger society. Numerous characteristics are commonly shared among these regions, but there are also distinctive socio-economic traits and behavioral patterns associated with each. The Eastern Kentucky nominating region, for example, is characterized by subsistence farming, limited job opportunities, low per capita incomes, and a familialistic orientation. The Central Kentucky region, however, is much more prosperous economically, with larger farms, greater industrial opportunities, and a much higher standard of living. The Western Kentucky counties in the sample are somewhat more urbanized than those of the other two regions. They have a higher standard of living, and they offer numerous commercial and industrial opportunities for prospective entrants into the labor force.

To what extent are variations in regional circumstances reflected in the career-choice patterns of Kentucky's high school seniors? For males, significant differences appear to exist in levels of aspirations among the three regions (Table 2). Only 38% of the Eastern Kentucky males aspired to professional occupations, while the percentages were 47 and 56% for those in Central and Western Kentucky. On the other hand, half of the Eastern Kentuckians aspired to manual and farm occupations as compared with only about 30% in the other two areas. Considerably smaller proportions of senior boys in each region aspired to white-collar occupations than aspired to professional or manual and farm occupations but, even so, the proportion of Central Kentucky youth wanting these occupations was much higher than the proportions in other regions.

TABLE 2
OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS ACCORDING TO REGION OF RESIDENCE

A. Males				
<u>Occupational Level</u>				
<u>Region</u>	<u>Professional</u>	<u>White Collar</u>	<u>Manual and Farm</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Percent</u>			
East (n=320)	37.5	11.6	50.9	100.0
Central (n=273)	46.5	22.0	31.5	100.0
West (n=278)	55.8	14.0	30.2	100.0
B. Females				
<u>Occupational Level</u>				
<u>Region</u>	<u>Professional</u>	<u>White Collar</u>	<u>Manual and Farm</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Percent</u>			
East (n=302)	33.1	53.6	13.2	100.0
Central (n=321)	29.9	57.6	12.5	100.0
West (n=269)	37.5	53.5	8.9	100.0

In general, then, aspirations among males are lowest in Eastern Kentucky and highest in Western Kentucky, with Bluegrass boys intermediate. These findings suggest that levels of aspirations are generally reflective of regional circumstances--a pattern which "makes sense" considering the differences in opportunities prevailing in these Kentucky regions and differences in the socioeconomic status levels of youth in each of the regions.

⁹Research studies have consistently shown that family socioeconomic status is highly correlated with occupational aspiration levels.

Among females, about a third of the seniors in each region said that they would like to enter professional occupations (Table 2). More than half of the girls in each region aspired to white-collar or professional occupations, and there was practically no difference between the proportions in each region. Perhaps most interesting is the fact that very few females in these rural Kentucky regions aspired to enter manual occupations, i.e., factory work, domestic service, etc.--only 13% in the eastern and central regions, and 9% in the western region.

Thus, the data in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that: (1) most males would like to enter professional occupations, while most females prefer white-collar occupations; (2) males aspire to professional occupations and to manual and farming occupations in much greater proportions than do females, whereas females aspire to white-collar positions in greater proportions than do males; (3) substantial differences are present in levels of aspirations of males among the three regions for all occupational categories; and (4) levels of aspirations of females do not appear to be affected significantly by regional circumstances.

II. Occupational Expectations

A. Occupational Expectations According to Sex

"Occupational expectations" refer to the occupations that youngsters realistically expect to attain. In measuring levels of occupational expectations, the following question was used: "What kind of work do you actually expect that you will be doing as a life-time occupation? Taking all things into account, what do you expect to do someday?"

Most rural Kentucky males said that they expected to enter manual or farming occupations (51%), while most of the females (49%) anticipated entrance into white-collar positions (Table 3). Compared with females, much greater proportions of males expected to enter both professional and manual and farming occupations while, compared with males, a substantially greater proportion of females expected to enter white-collar occupations. These findings are consistent with the tendency for girls to enter lower-level white-collar positions and are similar to the differential patterns between the sexes associated with levels of aspirations (Table 1).

TABLE 3
OCCUPATIONAL EXPECTATIONS ACCORDING TO SEX

	<u>Occupational Level</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Professional</u>	<u>White Collar</u>	<u>Manual and Farm</u>	
	<u>Percent</u>			
Males (n=843)	33.3	15.4	51.2	100.0
Females (n=875)	24.0	48.9	27.1	100.0

B. Occupational Expectations According to Region of Residence

Region of residence appears to be closely associated with levels of occupational expectations among males (Table 4). Twenty-five percent of the Eastern Kentucky males indicated expectations of entering high-level occupations, while the percentages were 36 and 40 for those in Central and Western Kentucky. Considerably smaller proportions in each of the three areas expected to enter white-collar occupations, but differentials among the three areas are still in evidence--particularly when expectations of Eastern Kentucky seniors are compared with those in Central and Western Kentucky. Regional variations are also evident when comparisons are made for expectations of manual and farming positions. A substantially greater proportion of males in Eastern Kentucky than in either of the other two regions said that they expected to enter blue-collar occupations or farming.

TABLE 4
OCCUPATIONAL EXPECTATIONS ACCORDING TO REGION OF RESIDENCE

<u>A. Males</u>				
<u>Occupational level</u>				
<u>Region</u>	<u>Professional</u>	<u>White Collar</u>	<u>Manual and Farm</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Percent</u>			
East (n=300)	25.3	10.0	64.7	100.0
Central (n=269)	35.7	18.2	46.1	100.0
West (n=274)	39.8	18.6	41.6	100.0

<u>B. Females</u>				
<u>Occupational Level</u>				
<u>Region</u>	<u>Professional</u>	<u>White Collar</u>	<u>Manual and Farm</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Percent</u>			
East (n=289)	26.6	43.9	29.4	100.0
Central (n=318)	21.1	51.9	27.0	100.0
West (n=268)	24.6	50.7	24.6	100.0

What accounts for these regional variations in occupational expectation levels among rural Kentucky males? Through additional analysis, it was determined that differences in proportions of youngsters in various socioeconomic status levels among the three regions are sufficient to account for most of the differences in expectations of "high-status occupations." When the effects of family socioeconomic status¹⁰ were controlled, variations among regions in expectations for professional occupations largely disappeared (Table 5). The only exception was that of low SES males in Western Kentucky.

¹⁰Family socioeconomic status is a composite indicator of social class standing, consisting of level-of-living scores and father's education.

Youngsters in this subpopulation are still much more likely to have high occupational expectations than either their Eastern or Central Kentucky counterparts. Thus, when SES differences are taken into consideration, Eastern Kentucky males have levels of occupational expectations generally comparable to those in Central or Western Kentucky.

TABLE 5

MALES WITH HIGH OCCUPATIONAL EXPECTATIONS
ACCORDING TO REGION OF RESIDENCE AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Region	High SES	Middle SES	Low SES	Total
<u>For each group, the percentage expecting professional occupations</u>				
East (n=76)	46.5	28.4	18.9	25.4
Central (n=96)	50.0	34.5	17.7	35.7
West (n=109)	47.7	30.7	37.2	39.8

For females, regional variations in proportions expecting to enter professional occupations are small, and do not appear to be significant (Table 4). Nor do there appear to be significant regional differences in proportions expecting to enter "white-collar" or "manual" and "farming" occupations. This finding is unexpected, since low occupational expectations are generally associated with low socioeconomic status levels. Since a preliminary analysis had revealed that a high proportion of Eastern Kentucky youngsters in the sample were in low SES categories, it was expected that both males and females would be characterized by lower occupational expectation levels than those in either of the other two regions. Instead, Eastern Kentucky females have levels of expectations comparable to those in the other two areas.

Several considerations may help to explain the high expectation levels of Eastern Kentucky girls relative to those in the other two regions. For one thing, 1970 census data reveal that higher proportions of working females in Eastern Kentucky were employed in professional and managerial occupations than in either Central or Western Kentucky.¹¹ No doubt this is due to the paucity of blue collar jobs for women in the eastern counties and the

¹¹ Of the working females in the counties composing the eastern portion of the sample, 23.8% were employed in professional and managerial occupations, while the corresponding percentages in the central and western portions were 15.9 and 16.5%.

consequent lower proportion of women who are employed. Thus, in terms of both the availability and the visibility of "high status" occupations, Eastern Kentucky girls may be somewhat more propelled toward positions at the upper reaches of the occupational hierarchy than females in either Central or Western Kentucky--if they work at all.

On a more psychological level, the effect of female role models should be considered. Professional females (such as county school superintendents, public school teachers, public health nurses, and extension agents) in Eastern Kentucky counties form a highly visible employment sector in the small towns and rural communities of the region. In addition, various development programs, the transmission of occupational information by local school systems, and returning migrants, the influx of mass media, and increasing integration with the larger society may also be conducive to the development of high expectation levels among Eastern Kentucky girls.

C. Occupational Aspiration-Expectation Discrepancies

When occupational aspirations of these seniors are compared with their expectations, the data indicate that most males would ideally prefer to enter "professional" or "high status" occupations, but that they actually expect to enter occupations that are somewhat lower in status, e.g., lower-level white-collar occupations and manual trades or farming (Tables 1 and 3). Among girls there is also some deflection from aspirations to expectations, but not as great as for males (Tables 1 and 3).

Additional analysis revealed that family socioeconomic status is associated with the deflection to lower expectations among both males and females, and that intelligence test scores and scholastic performance are also associated with aspiration-expectation discrepancies among males. That is, males with low scholastic performance and low intelligence test scores, and both males and females from low SES families, are more likely to reveal occupational aspiration-expectation discrepancies than those in high SES, scholastic performance, and intelligence test categories. It is family socioeconomic status, however, that appears to emerge as an especially good predictor of aspiration-expectation discrepancies among this group of high school seniors.

Summary findings from the data in Tables 3 and 4 indicate that (1) most males expect to enter manual and farming occupations, while most females anticipate entrance into white-collar positions; (2) much greater proportions of males than females expect to enter professional occupations or manual and farming occupations, while a higher proportion of females than males expect to enter white-collar occupations; (3) levels of occupational expectations vary according to region of residence among males, but there is little difference in levels of occupational expectations among females; and (4) higher proportions of both males and females aspire to high-status occupations than actually expect to enter such occupations, though the downward deflection is much greater for boys than for girls.

III. Educational Aspirations

A. Educational Aspirations According to Sex

Levels of educational aspirations were assessed through the following question: "If you could, and you were completely free to choose, would you go to college?" The findings indicate that both males and females aspired to attend college in large, but roughly equal, proportions (Table 6). When the "Yes, definitely" and "Yes, maybe" categories are combined, 77% of the males and 75% of the females indicate at least a "positive orientation" toward college attendance. Of particular significance are the very small proportions of seniors indicating definite plans not to attend college--only about 6% of the males and about 7% of the females. The high proportion of rural Kentucky youngsters aspiring to attend college may be associated with the long held belief in American society that higher education represents a basic avenue for upward social mobility. Furthermore, "community colleges" are within "easy reach" of most rural Kentuckians, and the development of various two year, paraprofessional programs may have made college attendance an even more attractive prospect for many young people.

TABLE 6

ASPIRATIONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE ACCORDING TO SEX

	<u>College Aspirations</u>				<u>Total</u>
	<u>Yes,</u> <u>Definitely</u>	<u>Yes,</u> <u>Maybe</u>	<u>No,</u> <u>Probably Not</u>	<u>No,</u> <u>Definitely Not</u>	
	<u>Percent</u>				
Males (n=916)	50.2	27.1	16.6	6.1	100.0
Females (n=914)	47.2	27.4	18.6	6.9	100.0

B. Educational Aspirations According to Region

A relatively high proportion of males in all three Kentucky regions indicated that they would "like to go to college" if they could (Table 7). When the "Yes, definitely" and "Yes, maybe" categories are combined, 72% in the Mountain region, 74% in the Bluegrass region, and 86% in the Western region indicate that they have considered attending college at one time or another. Furthermore, the data suggest that a somewhat higher proportion of males in the Western region than in either of the other two regions have aspirations for attending college (whether considering the "yes, definitely" category separately, or combining the "Yes, definitely" and "Yes, maybe" categories). Also, of significance is the high proportion of males in

Eastern Kentucky--perhaps because of economic considerations--who are "uncertain" about attending college ("Yes, maybe" category), and the somewhat smaller proportion of Eastern Kentucky males (in comparison with the other two areas) who are "definitely sure" that they would attend college if they could.

TABLE 7

ASPIRATIONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE ACCORDING TO REGION OF RESIDENCE

A. <u>Males</u>					
<u>College Aspiration</u>					
<u>Region</u>	<u>Yes, Definitely</u>	<u>Yes, Maybe</u>	<u>No, Probably Not</u>	<u>No, Definitely Not</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Percent</u>					
East (n=329)	38.3	33.7	21.9	6.1	100.0
Central (n=292)	51.7	22.6	18.2	7.5	100.0
West (n=295)	62.0	24.1	9.2	4.7	100.0

B. <u>Females</u>					
<u>College Aspiration</u>					
<u>Region</u>	<u>Yes, Definitely</u>	<u>Yes, Maybe</u>	<u>No, Probably Not</u>	<u>No, Definitely Not</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Percent</u>					
East (n=312)	43.9	30.8	18.6	6.7	100.0
Central (n=324)	40.7	25.3	25.9	8.0	100.0
West (n=278)	58.3	25.9	10.1	5.8	100.0

Among girls, a higher proportion in Western Kentucky than in any other Kentucky region had aspirations for attending college (Table 7); and, perhaps surprisingly, the Central Bluegrass area had the smallest proportion (40.7%). Also, of importance is the higher proportion of Eastern Kentucky females who are uncertain ("yes, maybe" category) about the possibility of college attendance (31%), and the large proportion (26%) of Central Kentucky females who would probably not attend college even if all the barriers to college attendance were somehow negated.

It is probable that Western Kentucky girls exhibit higher educational aspirations than those in the other two regions partly because of higher family socioeconomic status levels. The reasons are less clear why college aspirations are relatively high among Eastern Kentucky girls but somewhat lower in Central Kentucky, just the reverse of what might be expected. Perhaps Eastern Kentucky females see educational attainment as the most readily available means of increasing their limited occupational and social mobility prospects. Central Kentucky girls, on the other hand, may see more opportunities for occupational success and upward mobility, particularly in the white collar sector of the occupational hierarchy. Thus, Central Kentucky females may not feel the need for utilizing education as a means for social and physical mobility as acutely as their counterparts in less favorable ecological settings.

In summary Tables 6 and 7 indicate that: (1) both boys and girls aspire to attend college in large, but roughly equal proportions; and (2) in both groups, levels of educational aspirations vary by region of residence, i.e., highest for Western Kentucky youth and lowest for Central Kentucky.

IV. Educational Expectations

A. Educational Expectations According to Sex

Expectations of going to college were assessed with the following question: "Do you actually expect to go to college after graduation from high school?" Relatively large proportions of both males and females (44 and 42%, respectively) said they definitely expected to attend college (Table 8). Furthermore, when the "Yes" and "Maybe" responses are combined, the potential college-goers increase to 64% of the boys and 59% of the girls. More than a third of both sexes said that they did not plan to attend college. Perhaps the large proportion of girls planning college attendance indicates an increasing tendency for rural females to establish work careers of their own outside the home--a pattern long characteristic of their urban counterparts.

TABLE 8

EXPECTATIONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE, ACCORDING TO SEX

	<u>College Expectations</u>			
	Yes	Maybe	No	Total
	<u>Percent</u>			
Males (n=920)	44.0	19.5	36.5	100.0
Females (n=915)	41.9	17.0	41.1	100.0

B. Educational Expectations According to Region

Among males, there are substantial differences between the regions in the proportions expecting to go to college (Table 9)--56% in Western Kentucky as compared with 43 and 34% in Central and Eastern Kentucky. Again, this may reflect the higher standard of living in Daviess and Henderson counties as compared with youngsters in the other two regions.

Regional variations in college expectation levels are also evident among females. More than 51% of the Western Kentucky females planned to attend college after graduation from high school, while the percentage was approximately 38 in both Central and Western Kentucky. As in the case of college aspirations, it is interesting that more girls in the prosperous Central Bluegrass region than in the other regions say they do not expect to attend. No doubt in large part due to negative economic circumstances, over a fifth (22%) of the Eastern Kentucky females were unsure (the "maybe" category) about going to college.

TABLE 9

EXPECTATIONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE ACCORDING TO REGION OF RESIDENCE

A. Males				
College Expectations				
Region	Yes	Maybe	No	Total
	Percent			
East (n=331)	33.5	24.8	41.7	100.0
Central (n=293)	43.3	16.4	40.3	100.0
West (n=296)	56.4	16.6	27.0	100.0

B. Females				
College Expectations				
Region	Yes	Maybe	No	Total
	Percent			
East (n=312)	37.8	21.5	40.7	100.0
Central (n=324)	37.7	11.1	51.2	100.0
West (n=279)	51.3	19.0	29.7	100.0

C. Educational Aspiration-Expectation Discrepancies

For both males and females, only a slightly smaller proportion expected to enter college than had aspirations for college attendance (Tables 6 and 8). The difference was 6 percentage points for boys and 5 points for girls. These small differences are in contrast to the relatively great occupational aspiration-expectation discrepancies discussed earlier. Evidently, achieving a high-status occupation is not thought to be a realistic goal by a large proportion of rural Kentucky youngsters (as indicated by the relatively high degree of occupation-status deflection), but attending a term or two of college is considered more feasible. This pattern may partially reflect the relatively great emphasis placed on attending college (at least for a while), by family, peers, and classmates. If so, it indicates that strong social demands, i.e., the pressure to go to college, may sometimes have a tendency to negate unfavorable situational circumstances.

Thus, Tables 8 and 9 indicate that: (1) nearly half of both males and females expected to attend college after graduation from high school; (2) higher proportions of both boys and girls in the Western Kentucky region expected to attend college than those in either of the other two regions; and (3) only a slightly smaller proportion of both males and females actually expected to attend college than had aspirations for doing so.

V. Migration Plans

Leaving the home area is a serious consideration for most young persons. Moving into a new area involves breaking familiar patterns of interaction in old settings and establishing new behavior patterns in unfamiliar social settings. On the other hand, there is the "glamour" and "adventure" of new places that continually attract some young persons. Furthermore, in Kentucky, especially Eastern Kentucky, there is a long established norm of out-migration.

The data reveal that a high proportion of rural Kentuckians plan on leaving their present county of residence after graduation from high school. More than half of both males and females have at least entertained thoughts of leaving (Table 10--combining "yes, definitely" and "yes, perhaps" responses).

While migration expectations do not vary much by sex, there are substantial differences between the regions (Table 10). Sixty-seven percent of the males in Eastern Kentucky, as compared with 53 and 50% in Central and Western Kentucky, responded "Yes, perhaps," or "Yes, definitely," when asked if they planned on leaving their home counties. Greater proportions of girls than of boys in each area had thoughts of leaving. The corresponding percentages were 77% for Eastern Kentucky females, and 57 and 53% for those in Central and Western Kentucky.

Clearly, more youth of both sexes in Eastern Kentucky than in either Central or Western Kentucky have considered migrating. This pattern may reflect the limited employment opportunities in Eastern Kentucky. But thoughts of migrating are by no means limited to Mountain youth. Evidently, leaving the home county is considered at one time or another by almost every rural Kentuckian. To a great extent, then, rural youngsters appear to perceive their environmental context as a "retarding influence;" hence, they seriously consider migration to other areas that afford a better chance of achieving career objectives.

TABLE 10
MIGRATION PLANS ACCORDING TO SEX AND REGION OF RESIDENCE

A. Males					
Region	Migration Plans				Total
	Yes, Definitely	Yes, Perhaps	Maybe	No, Definitely Not	
	Percent				
East (n=330)	30.3	36.4	28.8	4.5	100.0
Central (n=292)	21.2	31.8	38.4	8.6	100.0
West (n=295)	18.6	31.5	41.0	8.8	100.0
Total (n=917)	23.7	33.4	33.6	7.2	100.0

B. Females					
Region	Migration Plans				Total
	Yes, Definitely	Yes, Perhaps	Maybe	No, Definitely Not	
	Percent				
East (n=311)	33.1	44.1	19.6	3.2	100.0
Central (n=324)	26.2	30.9	39.2	3.7	100.0
West (n=278)	17.3	35.6	41.7	5.4	100.0
Total (n=913)	25.8	36.8	33.3	4.1	100.0

VI. Felt-Certainty of Achieving Career Goals

Felt-certainty of achieving career goals may be dependent upon intellectual ability, motivation, various "situational" circumstances (such as financial resources and parental and peer influences), and the degree to which the steps to a goal are known and institutionalized. Any one of these factors, or a combination thereof, may influence how youth assess the likelihood of achieving occupational goals.

How do Kentucky's high school seniors feel about their chances of realizing their occupational objectives? Apparently they feel relatively certain. Seventy-two percent of the males and 76% of the females said that they were either "very sure" or "pretty sure" of reaching their occupational goals (Table 11), while only 8% of the males and just 5% of the females were "not at all sure."

TABLE 11
FELT-CERTAINTY OF ACHIEVING CAREER GOALS
ACCORDING TO SEX AND REGION OF RESIDENCE

A. <u>Males</u>					
<u>Degree of Felt-Certainty</u>					
<u>Region</u>	<u>Very Sure</u>	<u>Pretty Sure</u>	<u>Not Very Sure</u>	<u>Not at all Sure</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Percent</u>					
East (n=329)	18.2	51.1	22.2	8.5	100.0
Central (n=286)	17.8	57.7	18.5	5.9	100.0
West (n=289)	24.6	48.1	18.7	8.7	100.0
Total (n=904)	20.1	52.2	19.9	7.7	100.0
B. <u>Females</u>					
<u>Degree of Felt-Certainty</u>					
<u>Region</u>	<u>Very Sure</u>	<u>Pretty Sure</u>	<u>Not Very Sure</u>	<u>Not at all Sure</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Percent</u>					
East (n=304)	18.1	53.3	23.0	5.6	100.0
Central (n=322)	27.6	54.0	14.6	3.7	100.0
West (n=275)	28.7	45.5	21.1	4.7	100.0
Total (n=901)	24.8	51.2	19.4	4.7	100.0

When the relationship between felt-certainty of achieving career goals and region of residence is considered, only slight variations in degree of certainty emerge among males (Table 11). Among females, variations are also minimal, with the exception of the somewhat lower proportion of Eastern Kentucky girls who were "very sure," and the lower proportion of Central Kentucky girls who were "not very sure." Among Eastern Kentucky girls, it may be that financial considerations are partially responsible for doubts relative to the achievement of career objectives.

VII. The Relationship of Socioeconomic
Factors and Intelligence Test
Scores to Career Choice Variables

In studying the career decision-making process, various attempts have been made to identify the major determinants of aspiration/expectation levels. Past research, for example, has established that such variables as parental influence, community of residence, performance in school, intelligence test scores, and socioeconomic status are all associated in varying degrees with the crystallization of occupational/educational choice levels. Not all of these factors are necessarily direct determinants of the career choices of rural youth; some may serve more as intervening variables in the causal sequence. For example, rural or urban residence, performance in school, intelligence test scores and, to a certain extent, parental influence may all be affected by family socioeconomic status.

In Tables 12 and 13 the association of selected socioeconomic factors and of intelligence test scores with levels of occupational and educational choice is examined for these rural Kentucky youngsters. Among both boys and girls all five socioeconomic status measures as well as intelligence test scores are significantly and positively associated with occupational and educational aspiration and expectation levels (Table 12). Thus, all six of these variables are highly predictive of aspiration/expectation levels for both males and females. Insofar as high aspirations and strong expectations of achieving one's goals are themselves forces propelling young people to actual attainment, then, the probability of success may be greatly enhanced by coming from a high socioeconomic status background and having high intelligence test scores--and correspondingly decreased for youth of low socioeconomic status background and intelligence test scores.

TABLE 12

RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS
AND INTELLIGENCE TEST SCORES TO CAREER CHOICE VARIABLES,
FOR SENIOR BOYS

Career Choice Variable	Direction of Relationship ^a	Socioeconomic Factors and Intelligence Test Scores	N	D.F.	χ^2	p^b
Occupational Aspiration	+	Socioeconomic ^c Status	868	10	92.779	< .01
	+	Father's Occupation	817	20	98.079	< .01
	+	Mother's Education	866	25	106.609	< .01
	+	Father's Education	862	25	65.446	< .01
	+	Level of Living ^d	871	20	114.140	< .01
	+	Intelligence	777	15	126.107	< .01
Occupational Expectation	+	Socioeconomic Status ^c	842	10	119.540	< .01
	+	Father's Occupation	793	20	119.478	< .01
	+	Mother's Education	839	25	131.131	< .01
	+	Father's Education	838	25	107.444	< .01
	+	Level of Living ^d	843	20	110.981	< .01
	+	Intelligence Test Scores	754	15	151.172	< .01

TABLE 12 (Cont.)

Career Choice Variable	Direction of Relationship ^a	Socioeconomic Factors and Intelligence Test Scores	N	D.F.	χ^2	p ^b
Aspiration for	+	Socioeconomic Status ^c	912	6	109.719	< .01
	+	Father's Occupation	856	12	64.515	< .01
Attending College	+	Mother's Education	910	15	121.627	< .01
	+	Father's Education	904	15	101.656	< .01
	+	Level of Living ^d	916	12	78.323	< .01
	+	Intelligence Test Scores	814	9	130.208	< .01
Expectation for Attending College	+	Socioeconomic Status ^c	916	4	153.070	< .01
	+	Father's Occupation	859	8	83.230	< .01
	+	Mother's Education	913	10	167.978	< .01
	+	Father's Education	907	10	140.455	< .01
	+	Level of Living ^d	920	8	117.793	< .01
	+	Intelligence Test Scores	818	6	179.917	< .01

^a"+" indicates a positive relationship between socioeconomic factor or intelligence test scores and career choice variable.

^b"p" refers to level of statistical probability.

^cSocioeconomic status represents a composite indicator of social class standing consisting of level of living scores and father's education.

^dLevel of living was measured by the Danley-Ramsey Level-of-Living Scale.

TABLE 13
RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS
AND INTELLIGENCE TEST SCORES TO CAREER CHOICE VARIABLES,
FOR SENIOR GIRLS

Career Choice Variable	Direction of Relationship ^a	Socioeconomic Factors and Intelligence Test Scores	N	D.F.	X ²	p ^b
Occupational Aspiration	+	Socioeconomic Status ^c	885	10	73.119	≤ .01
	+	Father's Occupation	841	20	52.353	< .01
	+	Mother's Education	890	25	84.208	< .01
	+	Father's Education	881	25	83.509	< .01
	+	Level of Living ^d	868	20	59.739	< .01
	+	Intelligence Test Scores	810	15	88.208	< .01
Occupational Expectation	+	Socioeconomic Status ^c	869	10	67.898	< .01
	+	Father's Occupation	827	20	48.810	< .01
	+	Mother's Education	873	25	67.096	< .01
	+	Father's Education	865	25	78.753	< .01
	+	Level of Living ^d	871	20	65.411	≤ .01
	+	Intelligence Test Scores	796	15	79.852	< .01

TABLE 13 (Cont.)

Career Choice Variable	Direction of Relationship ^a	Socioeconomic Factors and Intelligence Test Scores	N	D.F.	X ²	p ^b
Aspiration for Attending College	+	Socioeconomic Status	907	6	113.308	<.01
	+	Father's Occupation	857	12	55.985	<.01
	+	Mother's Education	912	15	98.676	<.01
	+	Father's Education	903	15	92.739	<.01
	+	Level of Living ^d	910	12	95.693	<.01
	+	Intelligence Test Scores	831	9	100.310	<.01
Expectation for Attending College	+	Socioeconomic Status ^c	908	4	134.017	<.01
	+	Father's Occupation	858	8	68.003	<.01
	+	Mother's Education	913	10	140.223	<.01
	+	Father's Education	904	10	117.385	<.01
	+	Level of Living ^d	911	8	117.442	<.01
	+	Intelligence Test Scores	832	6	121.416	<.01

^a"+" indicates a positive relationship between socioeconomic factor or intelligence test scores and career choice variable.

^b"p" refers to level of statistical probability.

^cSocioeconomic status represents a composite indicator of social class standing consisting of level of living scores and father's education.

^dLevel of living was measured by the Danley-Ramsey Level-of-Living Scale.

SUMMARY AND GENERALIZATIONS

The major findings of this study may be summarized as follows:

Occupational Aspirations:

1. Males more often aspire to professional occupations than to any other type, while most females aspire to enter white-collar positions.
2. Compared with females, higher proportions of males aspire to professional and to manual and farm occupations.
3. Compared with males, higher proportions of females aspire to white-collar occupations.
4. Levels of occupational aspiration are lowest for Eastern Kentucky males and highest for Western Kentucky males, with Central Kentucky males intermediate.
5. Female occupational aspirations do not vary by region.

Occupational Expectations:

1. Males more often expect to enter manual or farming occupations than any other type, while most females expect to enter white-collar occupations.
2. Compared with females, higher proportions of males expect to enter professional and manual or farming occupations.
3. Compared with males, higher proportions of females expect to achieve white-collar occupations.
4. Levels of occupational expectations vary according to regional context. They are lowest for Eastern Kentucky males and highest for Western Kentucky males, with Bluegrass males intermediate. Differences in socioeconomic status largely explain these differentials.
5. Female occupational expectations do not vary by region.
6. Most males, and many females, would like to enter high level occupations, but they actually expect to enter occupations that are somewhat lower in status.

Educational Aspirations:

1. High proportions of both sexes aspire to attend college. Males and females aspire to attend college in roughly equal proportions.
2. Greater proportions of both males and females in Western Kentucky than in Central or Eastern Kentucky want to go to college.

Educational Expectations:

1. High proportions of both sexes say that they expect to enroll in college following graduation from high school. Males and females expect to attend college in roughly equal proportions.
2. For both males and females, it appears that expectations to attend college vary according to regional context. A greater proportion of both males and females in Western Kentucky than in Central or Eastern Kentucky want to go to college.
3. Among both males and females, about as many expect to enter college as aspire to, so that educational aspiration-expectation discrepancies are slight.

Migration Expectations:

1. High proportions of both males and females, in all three regions, expect to leave their home county after graduation from high school.
2. Compared with males, higher proportions of females are considering a move from their home county.
3. Proportions expecting to leave the home county are highest for Eastern Kentuckians and lowest for Western Kentuckians.

Felt-Certainty of Achieving Career Goals:

1. High proportions of both males and females say they are relatively sure of achieving their career goals.
2. There is little difference in degree of felt-certainty of achieving career goals between males and females.
3. There is very little regional variation in degree of felt-certainty of achieving career goals.

Relationship of Socioeconomic Factors and Intelligence Test Scores to Career Choice Variables:

1. For both sexes, the probability of choosing a high-status occupation or planning to attend college is greatly enhanced if one is from a high socioeconomic status family and has a relatively high intelligence test score.

CONCLUSIONS

These data indicate that a number of facets of the career choosing process vary according to the social categories which comprise this population of rural, high school seniors. Sex, region of residence, socioeconomic status, other socioeconomic factors, and intellectual ability (as indicated by intelligence test scores) influence their occupational and educational

aspirations and expectations, migration tendencies, and felt-certainty of achieving career goals. It is hoped that all who are in a position to assist young people in the career planning process--ministers, teachers, school administrators and, particularly, youth guidance counselors--will find this information useful and relevant in the development of better counseling programs and, ultimately, in helping youth find their place in the community and the national labor force.

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